

IN THE CLAIMS:

Substitute the following claims for the pending claims having the same numbers.

1-12. (canceled)

13. (currently amended) ~~The suspension system according to claim 2, further comprising~~ A suspension system, comprising:

an axle assembly including an axle, at least a portion of the axle being made of a composite material;

at least two beams attached to the axle, thereby preventing rotation of the axle relative to the beams, the beams pivoting relative to a vehicle frame; and

at least two metal sleeves secured exteriorly about the axle composite portion.

14. (original) The suspension system according to claim 13, wherein each of the beams is attached to a respective one of the sleeves.

15. (original) The suspension system according to claim 13, wherein each of the sleeves is bonded to the axle composite portion.

16. (original) The suspension system according to claim 13, wherein each of the beams is welded to a respective one of the sleeves.

17. (original) The suspension system according to claim 13, wherein the axle composite portion extends through each of the sleeves.

18. (original) The suspension system according to claim 13, further comprising at least two axle seats, each of the axle seats being interconnected between a respective one of the sleeves and a respective one of the beams.

19. (original) The suspension system according to claim 13, further comprising at least two spindles, each of the spindles being attached to a respective one of the sleeves.

20. (original) The suspension system according to claim 19, wherein the axle composite portion extends into each of the spindles.

21. (original) The suspension system according to claim 19, wherein each of the spindles is bonded to the axle composite portion.

22-30. (canceled)

31. (currently amended) ~~The suspension system according to claim 30~~ A suspension system, comprising:

an axle assembly including a composite axle portion and a spindle attached to the composite axle portion, the spindle being configured to permit rotation of a wheel relative to the axle; and

at least two beams attached to the axle assembly, the beams pivoting relative to a vehicle frame,

wherein the spindle is attached to a sleeve at least partially overlying the composite axle portion.

32. (original) The suspension system according to claim 31, wherein the spindle is welded to the sleeve.

33. (original) The suspension system according to claim 31, further comprising an axle seat attached to the sleeve.

34. (previously presented) The suspension system according to claim 33, wherein the axle seat is interconnected between the sleeve and one of the beams.

35. (previously presented) The suspension system according to claim 34, wherein the axle seat is welded to each of the sleeve and the one of the beams.

36. (currently amended) ~~The suspension system according to claim 30~~ A suspension system, comprising:

an axle assembly including a composite axle portion and a spindle attached to the composite axle portion, the spindle

being configured to permit rotation of a wheel relative to the axle; and

at least two beams attached to the axle assembly, the beams pivoting relative to a vehicle frame,

wherein the composite axle portion is received within an interior of the spindle.

37. (canceled)

38. (currently amended) ~~The suspension system according to claim 30~~ A suspension system, comprising:

an axle assembly including a composite axle portion and a spindle attached to the composite axle portion, the spindle being configured to permit rotation of a wheel relative to the axle; and

at least two beams attached to the axle assembly, the beams pivoting relative to a vehicle frame,

wherein the spindle is bonded to the composite axle portion.

39-52. (canceled)